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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARAMARIBO 000610

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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WHA/CAR FOR JACKIE ROSHOLT, INR FOR BOB CARHART

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NS](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: CHINESE UNPOPULAR WITH SURINAME PRESS: "CHINESE
INVASION?"

REF: A. PARAMARIBO 297
[1](#)B. PARAMARIBO 305
[1](#)C. PARAMARIBO 315
[1](#)D. PARAMARIBO 346
[1](#)E. PARAMARIBO 441

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[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Surinamese media is severely biased against Chinese immigrants to Suriname, Chinese products, and China as a political presence. Privately editors and journalists commented bluntly, "I don't like the Chinese." The newspapers are to a degree beholden to the Chinese, however, as they own many of the shops where newspapers are sold. The press's yellow journalism tactics provide counterpoint to the eager acceptance of Chinese friendship by the Government of Suriname (GOS). This cable continues a series (refs) on China and its presence and influence in Suriname in 2007. END SUMMARY

"Chinese Invasion?"

[1](#)2. (U) Surinamese newspapers frequently run stories and editorial content critical of the ethnic Chinese presence in Suriname. Most is directed toward the so-called "new Chinese," recent immigrants who run hundreds of small corner shops across Suriname, who are accused of obtaining through corrupt means residence and business permits more quickly than Surinamese citizens. In 2007, Suriname's four newspapers carried numerous disapproving editorial pieces, much of it focusing on the idea that Suriname will be taken over -- economically, linguistically, or politically -- by the Chinese. Titles include "Suriname for the Surinamers" and "Chinese Invasion or Not?" Editorialists pledged to be "watchful" and "alert" regarding the Chinese community, compared the Chinese presence to that of Jews in Germany before World War II, and commented "I think I'll just learn to speak Mandarin, the future language of Suriname." The image of Suriname as a colony of China was rampant.

"Congratulations for Human Rights Violators"

[1](#)3. (U) Surinamese papers maintained a steady drumbeat of criticism of the Chinese government, its embassy in Suriname, and the government of Suriname (GOS) -- which was painted as a weak-kneed, opportunist lackey of the Chinese. The headline "Congratulations for Human Rights Violators,"

printed after the GOS sent congratulations to China on the opening of its 2007 party congress, is an example of typical editorial sarcasm. Another paper reacted to GOS support for the One-China Policy in an editorial titled "Development Without a Human Face," writing, "sometimes you ask yourself if your own government isn't a guest in your own country." When the GOS firmly refused Taiwanese aid, the press accused the Chinese Ambassador of whispering how to handle the matter in the ear of the Vice-President, and the embassy of "diplomatic intimidation." While China was occasionally praised for its rapid development, this was outweighed by criticism of its human rights record.

"Slant Eyed" "Junk"

¶4. (U) In the latter half of 2007, press ire focused on Chinese products that were internationally criticized for their quality. A glut of articles were published, out of proportion to the danger created by the products. One paper printed a satirical story titled "A Chinese Day," whose protagonist encounters "slant-eyed" bugs, monsters, and women who emerge from Chinese products and leave him in the hospital. An editorial on the donation of European fire fighting equipment tangentially quipped "luckily it is not junk from the People's Republic of China." An editorial cartoon appeared with a happy, stereotypically Chinese restaurant owner thinking of money while hanging food next to a dead rat in a garbage area.

"I Don't Like Them..." But I Need Them

¶5. (SBU) In private conversation, reporters and editors are more blunt than their newspaper content. When talking about

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trafficking in persons, one reporter, unprompted, brought up the Chinese issue to PolOff and said, "to be honest, I don't like them." Others have made similar comments. According to the editors of two other newspapers, their content would be even more critical if allowed. Since newspapers are often sold in Chinese shops, the papers' owners need to protect their sales. The editor of a prominent daily owned by an influential businessman with political aspirations told PolOff the only time the owner had ever influenced his editorial content was when the paper criticized the Chinese; the owner feared his products would be boycotted by the Chinese shop owners. The owner of a second paper told PolOff a Chinese business association in Suriname had threatened him with a boycott, so he had reduced the critical editorial content.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: While the GOS cozying up to China despite its poor human rights and environmental record is disheartening, the blame leveled by the press on ethnic Chinese for many of the nation's problems is borderline racist. Suriname's poorly integrated "new Chinese" immigrants are used by the press as an "internal foreign enemy" -- following the time honored tradition of yellow journalism around the globe -- and serve as one medium to unite the multiethnic Surinamese together. As China continues to expand economically, politically, and demographically, the dichotomous reactions of Suriname's needy government and threatened public may present an example of conflicts ahead. END COMMENT
SCHREIBER HUGHES